

POLICY ON REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS AND THEIR ATTENDANCE AT [CHURCH NAME]

ADOPTED BY RESOLUTION OF THE VESTRY ON DATE

////////////////////////////////////

This policy establishes the protocols and procedures whereby the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] will respond to a request to worship at services and/or participate in church-related programs from a person who is a registered sex offender or for whom abuse has been confirmed by confession or an investigation, while seeking to protect those who are vulnerable in the congregation, particularly children, youth and/or the cognitively disabled. This internal policy is intended to provide guidance to the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] or their designees; it is not intended to confer rights on any person or entity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

////////////////////////////////////

There are two biblical principles that undergird the protocol established in this document.

1. The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] take seriously their duty as leaders to be good shepherds and to ensure, insofar as they are able, the safety of those who attend worship services and/or other program activities at [Church Name].
2. The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] acknowledge the clear scriptural teaching that all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and that the saving love and grace of Jesus Christ is available to all.

DEFINITION OF “REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER”

////////////////////////////////////

The term “registered sex offender” is defined as anyone who has been convicted of a sexual crime and is listed on “Megan’s List” (a public registry of sex offenders), located at <http://www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us/>.

LIMITS OF THIS POLICY DOCUMENT

Several protective measures already exist, which are designed to help ensure the safety of [Church Name's] vulnerable populations. This protocol will not address these protective measures which include:

1. processing criminal background record checks for all paid and unpaid staff, leaders, and volunteers who work with children, youth, and/or the cognitively disabled;
2. diocesan-approved trainings on the prevention of sexual abuse for all paid and unpaid staff, leaders, and volunteers who work with children, youth, and/or the cognitively disabled;
3. security procedures [Church Name] has implemented for both Sundays and weekdays; and
4. laws our leaders must comply with, such as mandated reporting of suspected abuse.

IDENTIFICATION OF REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

Registered sex offenders sometimes make their background and legal history known directly to clergy or staff. They may also be known to members of the congregation, who in turn make this known to clergy or a member of staff. Each [Church Name] employee has an obligation to report the presence of known registered sex offenders at worship service or activities to the Rector. The Rector will investigate all such reports.

[Church Name] will implement reasonable pre-emptive measures in order to determine if registered sex offenders may be regularly attending worship services and/or participating in church programs. To that end, the following will be implemented immediately:

1. The database secretary will complete an online Megan's List search of all those tagged in the database as "Local Active Body." A field will be created in the database to mark that a search has been completed and to record the date on which the search was completed.
2. The database secretary will complete an online Megan's List search of all who identify themselves as new to our congregation. Newcomers presently make themselves known via "Welcome" inserts in the bulletin, "Connect with Us" brochures in the pew holders, or more directly to a member of the clergy or to a staff person. This process will be managed by the parish administrator similar to the way in which "Welcome" inserts and "Connect with Us" brochures are presently processed.

PROCEDURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED UPON IDENTIFICATION OF A REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER

Once the Rector becomes aware of a registered sex offender who desires to participate in the worship or programs of [Church Name], he/she will meet with that person to begin implementation of a three-step process. A written record of each step of the process shall be securely kept.

The three steps will be completed in an expedient fashion. However, until all three steps have been completed, the registered sex offender will not be allowed to attend [Church Name's] primary worship services or activities where children, youth, and/or the cognitively disabled are present. Attendance at other church programs during this interim time (e.g., adult house groups, weekday services, etc.) will be at the discretion of the Rector and may involve notification of participants of those activities of the background of the registered sex offender.

The three steps to be implemented are as follows:

1. APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO ATTEND [CHURCH NAME]

The registered sex offender will complete and sign *Form 1: Application for Permission to Attend [Church Name]* (attached). The following information will be requested on that form:

1. Background information including contact information, marital status, previous addresses, present employment, Social Security number, date of birth, aliases (some of this information is needed to obtain a criminal record check).
2. The exact nature of the conviction and incarceration.
3. Additional charges made of which he/she may not have been convicted. (The possibility exists that someone may have been charged with additional sexual offense(s), but was not convicted of the alleged abuse. [Church Name] reserves the right to assess these specific situations as relevant in a desire to be proactive and protective toward the congregation. [Church Name] will proceed cautiously and will err on the side of caution.)
4. Location of the victim(s), if known, and specifically whether they attend any [Church Name] activities.
5. Contact information for parole or probation officer.
6. Conditions of parole/probation.
7. All therapeutic treatment during and since incarceration. Contact information for therapist(s) or counselor(s) must be provided.
8. Church or faith background, if any.
9. Church involvement during and since incarceration, if any. Contact information for previous pastor(s)/church(es) must be provided.
10. Signed permission and release to talk to any third parties named in the application.
11. Signed permission for a criminal record check.

2. INVESTIGATION

The Rector or his/her designee will thoroughly investigate the information gathered on Form 1. He/she will complete and sign *Form 2: Investigation* (attached). The Rector/designee will gather information, which would ordinarily include the following steps as applicable:

1. Criminal Record Check – Confirm the nature of the conviction by running a criminal history record check.
2. Parole Officer – Speak with the parole or probation officer about the conditions of parole/probation, obtaining a copy of any agreement if possible. The following questions may be asked:
 - a. Is the registered sex offender still on parole?
 - b. Did he/she complete his/her full sentence in prison?
 - c. Is he/she allowed to attend church given the conditions of parole?
 - d. If the parole officer says that the offender is free to attend church, would the parole officer recommend any conditions for attendance?
 - e. Does the parole agreement contain the condition of congregational notification?
 - f. Information from the parole officer is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the officer's response should be provided.
3. Victims – Determine whether or not the registered sex offender's victim(s) has any connection to [Church Name]
4. Therapy – Talk to counselors or therapists, asking the following questions:
 - a. What therapy has the registered sex offender undergone?
 - b. What understanding does the therapist believe the offender has of his/her crime?
 - c. Is he/she in an ongoing recovery group?
 - d. Would the therapist recommend any conditions for church attendance?

Information from the therapist is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the therapist's response should be provided.

5. Church Involvement - Speak to the rector/pastor of any church the registered sex offender has attended since being released from prison. Questions to be asked include the following:
 - a. What was the behavior/demeanor of the registered sex offender while in attendance?
 - b. What services/activities did he/she attend?
 - c. What, if any, conditions for attendance were put in place? Did the offender adhere to any such conditions?
 - d. What pastoral care did he/she receive?
 - e. Why did he/she leave the church?
 - f. Would the rector/pastor recommend the registered sex offender be allowed to attend [Church Name]? If so, what conditions, if any, would he/she recommend?

This information from the rector/pastor is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the pastor's response should be provided.

3. FORM 3: ATTENDANCE AND SPIRITUAL CARE COVENANT

Examining all of the information gathered, the Rector will create an *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* with the assistance of three additional people:

1. The Rector's designee (the person who completed the investigation), or the Senior Warden, or a member of [Church Name's] Vestry;
2. [Church Name's] Chancellor; and
3. A psychologist, counselor, or social worker.

The *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* will have two purposes. First, it will ensure the ongoing safety of [Church Name's] vulnerable populations. Second, it will address the needs of the registered sex offender for spiritual care.

Regarding the first purpose, to ensure the ongoing safety of [Church Name's] vulnerable populations, the *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* will examine the following possibilities regarding church attendance:

Full Exclusion

Is full exclusion necessary for any of the following reasons?

1. Conditional attendance is not feasible or enforceable;
2. The offender's crimes have been so frequent or heinous that exclusion is the only appropriate action;
3. One or more of the offender's victims attends the church.

Full Inclusion

Given the nature of the offense and subsequent treatment, will the registered sex offender be allowed to attend Sunday services and/or other activities without conditions or limitations?

Conditional Attendance

Will the registered sex offender be offered a conditional attendance agreement? Conditions might include:

- Limitations for certain services and/or program activities (i.e. Sunday services are not allowed, but the Wednesday morning service is allowed; the Lenten Dinner Course held on church property is not allowed, but participation in an "adults only" or same-gender small group is allowed).
- Limited access to certain parts of the building when the sex offender is on church property (i.e. youth wing, education wing) – in this model more extensive notification of staff, security personnel, and perhaps others might be necessary as this is more difficult to monitor. Bathrooms are particularly difficult to monitor.
- Chaperone requirement - the sex offender must always be in the presence of a designated chaperone while on church property.
- Combination approach – chaperoned attendance for certain events (Sunday morning worship) but unchaperoned attendance at other events (weekday worship, small groups).

Chaperone Agreement

If the registered sex offender is allowed to attend [Church Name] with a chaperone who is with him/her 100% of the time, the conditional attendance agreement must specify the following:

- Who is/are the chaperone(s)? Do the proposed chaperones have sufficient objectivity?

- When and where will the chaperone and sex offender meet prior to church activities and part following church activities?
- What happens if either party must cancel?
- What is the expectation regarding restroom visits?
- What reports must the chaperone provide to church leadership?
- What are the responsibilities of the chaperone beyond accompanying the registered sex offender each week?

Violations of Agreement

If the registered sex offender is allowed to attend [Church Name] only under certain conditions, what are the consequences for violation of the agreement? A process might include a meeting of the offender with the Rector, review of his/her participation, permanent dismissal from worship, or the signing of a renewed agreement.

Notification

Does notification about the presence of the registered sex offender at worship or church activities need to be given, and if so, to whom? Communicate the notification plan to sex offender and verify whether any further permission is required from the registered sex offender regarding the notification to be given.

Periodic Review:

When should the *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* be reviewed? A specific date will be included in the Covenant.

Regarding the second purpose, the Covenant will outline a spiritual care plan for the registered sex offender. Following the emphases in [Church Name's] vision statement – [vision statement here], the plan will be specific about ways in which the registered sex offender will be enabled to:

1. [Worship: Those establishing the Covenant will examine alternatives for participation in regular corporate worship, if attendance at Sunday morning worship is not an option at all. This may include worship on Wednesday mornings or worship at other recommended churches such as Shepherd's Heart on Sunday evenings.
2. Grow: Those establishing the Covenant will examine ways in which discipleship can be encouraged, perhaps using Church Name's small group system, individual mentoring, Christian recovery groups, etc.
3. Give: Those establishing the Covenant will examine ways in which the grace experienced in Christ can be expressed through service and the use of the individual's gifts.]

The Rector will make the final decision about the *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* and produce a written record of the action plan. The Rector and registered sex offender must sign the Covenant. If chaperones are part of the Covenant, they should sign the agreement, as well as indicate that they are fully informed of the nature of the agreement.

On the appointment of a new Rector, that rector will be given the files relating to any and all existing Covenants. During the time of an interregnum, the Senior Warden, if not already aware of existing Covenants, will be given the files relating to any and all Covenants.

PROTOCOL & POLICY FOR PERMISSION TO ATTEND [CHURCH NAME]

////////////////////////////////////

This protocol has been adopted by [Church Name] to accommodate the request of a person who is a registered sex offender to worship at services and/or participate in church-related programs, while protecting those who are vulnerable in the congregation, particularly children, youth and/or the cognitively disabled.

There are two biblical principles that undergird this protocol:

1. The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] take seriously their duty as leaders to be good shepherds and to ensure, insofar as they are able, the safety of those who attend worship services and/or other program activities at [Church Name].
2. The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of [Church Name] acknowledge the clear scriptural teaching that all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and that the saving love and grace of Jesus Christ is available to all.

The protocol has three steps. First, a registered sex offender who desires to worship at [Church Name] must complete an *Application for Permission to Attend*. Second, the information provided on the application form will be investigated by the Rector or his/her designee. Third, the Rector as well as three other persons will draft an *Attendance and Spiritual Care Covenant* that both the Rector and registered sex offender will sign. The purpose of the *Covenant* is twofold:

1. to ensure the ongoing safety of [Church Name's] vulnerable populations; and
2. to address the needs of the registered sex offender for spiritual care.

These three steps should be completed in an expedient fashion. However, until all three steps have been completed, the registered sex offender will not be allowed to attend [Church Name's] primary worship services or activities where children, youth, and/or the cognitively disabled are present. Attendance at other church programs during this interim time (i.e. house groups, weekday services, etc.) will be at the discretion of the Rector and is likely to involve notification of participants of those activities of the background of the registered sex offender. In the event that a notification will be given, written authorization from the sex offender should be secured with respect to such notification.

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO ATTEND [CHURCH NAME]

////////////////////////////////////

Full name: _____ Date: _____

Present address: _____

Address(es) since incarceration: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Date of birth: _____

Other names (maiden, alias, nickname): _____

Social Security number: _____

Marital status: _____

Present occupation and employer: _____

All criminal charges, even if some allegations were unproven (what/when/where):

Exact nature of conviction (what/when/where):

Date and place of incarceration: _____

Do any victims (whether from unproven allegations or criminal convictions) attend [Church Name] or participate in any church programs? Circle: **YES or NO**

Name and contact information of probation or parole officer:

What were the conditions of probation or parole (provide a copy of official documentation):

Name(s) and contact information of therapist(s) or counselor(s):

Specify the nature of any therapy/counseling undergone during or since incarceration:

Name(s) of church(es) and pastor(s) where there has been involvement since incarceration, if any:

Are you part of an ongoing discipleship small group? Circle: **YES or NO**

If yes, provide leader's name and contact information.

Provide a brief statement of Christian faith and experience (conversion, spiritual growth), if any:

PERMISSION AND RELEASE

////////////////////////////////////
The above information in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that false information may lead to denial of my application for attendance at [Church Name].

I hereby authorize [Church Name] to verify all information contained on this application with any of the third parties who are listed. I further authorize that any person listed above may disclose any and all personal knowledge of me. This includes all criminal, pastoral, legal, medical or psychological records, or any other area or record of importance to this application. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by those identified on this application.

Furthermore, I waive the right to sue the aforementioned persons for releasing such requested information.

I understand the purpose of this application and agree to the release and verification of the aforementioned information.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

I authorize [Church Name] representatives to complete a Criminal Record Check and to use information provided in this application for that purpose.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

INVESTIGATION FORM

////////////////////////////////////
Name of person completing investigation: _____ Date: _____

Name of registered sex offender: _____

The investigation is to address the following categories detailed in the policy document.

1. Criminal Record Check

Attach the criminal record check to this document.

2. Parole Officer

The information from the parole officer is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the officer's response should be provided. Attach a copy of the parole agreement with this document.

3. Victims

Do any of the victims have any connection to [Church Name]? If yes, describe and attach to this document.

4. Therapy

Attach any documentation provided by therapist(s). The information from the therapist is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the therapist's response should be provided and attach to this document.

5. Church Involvement

Attach any documentation provided by pastor(s). The information from the pastor is to be obtained in writing or, if that is not possible, a detailed written account of the pastor's response should be provided and attached to this document.

6. Other Pertinent Information

Was any additional information gathered? If yes, attach to this document.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

ATTENDANCE AND SPIRITUAL CARE COVENANT

Names of those completing action plan:

Rector: _____

Rector's designee, senior warden, or member of vestry: _____

[Church Name's] chancellor: _____

Trained psychologist, counselor, or social worker: _____

PART 1: ATTENDANCE PLAN TO ENSURE SAFETY OF [CHURCH NAME'S] VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Outline a specific plan that addresses all of the categories detailed in the policy document.

1. Full Exclusion
2. Full Inclusion
3. Conditional Attendance
4. Chaperone Agreement
5. Violation of Agreement
6. Notification
7. Date when Attendance Plan will be reviewed

PART 2: PLAN TO ENSURE SPIRITUAL CARE OF REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER

Outline a specific plan that addresses all of the categories detailed in the policy document:

1. Worship
2. Grow
3. Give *[These are the church's values as mentioned in Mission Statement]

The Rector and registered sex offender must sign this document. Designated chaperones may be requested to sign the agreement as well.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____